2: Boissevain E-5 (1960-1961) 1965
EZ6 Malta EZ6

361 landlords and other important people who influence the affairs of
369 the country live and work in the city or its suburbs. Finally, the
464 greater part of the island's wage-earning population travels to work in this area.

369 Differences in language, dress and education set many of the villagers apart from their urban compatriots. That this should be so is not surprising, for the inhabitants of the city have been in contact with the country's foreign masters for many centuries.
565 The Maltese upper classes, and those who aspire to be so con-
177 sidered, have studiously imitated the manners, speech and dress of these foreign residents. An English visitor early in the seventeenth century remarked on this contrast between the townsmen, who struck him as being 'altogether frenchified', and the countrymen, whom he described as 'half clad, and indeed a miserable people'.[1]

177 There is a noticeable difference between the heavy consonants
19 and broad vowels of the uneducated countryman, and the
369 English-accented Maltese of the inhabitants of Sliema, many of whose children speak more English than Maltese. There are also differences in vocabulary and inflection, for the language spoken in Valletta and the towns contains many more Italian and English words and expressions than the village Maltese. In fact, their preference for foreign words has given the inhabitants of Sliema the collective, and slightly derogatory, nickname of *tal-mama*, which derives from their habit of using the Italian word *mamà* (mother) instead of the Maltese *omm*. Village children, however, are now taught a standard Maltese at school, and they are urged to substitute this, *il-Malti bil-pulit*, for their local dialects.

186 The social and cultural differences between town and country
369 have led to the creation of stereotypes. The typical townsman was
829 often described to me by villagers as a white-collar worker who goes to cocktail parties, tries to look like an Englishman – pipe, tweeds and moustache – and speaks English to his children. The villager, on the other hand, is portrayed as an illiterate rustic who spends his money on wine and fireworks, without a thought for the future of his children. Both caricatures, of course, are gross exaggerations, but each, none the less, contains elements of truth.
369 But many farmers and poor village labourers make great sacrifices
871 in order to give their children an education beyond the elementary
1905.

[1] George Sandys, *A Relation of a Journey Begun A.D. 1610* (London, W. Barnett, 1615), p. 234.

5: Cremona B-3, 4 (no date) 1923
EZ6 Malta EZ6

Maltese Death, Mourning, and Funeral Customs.

764 Sir James Frazer's communication of a coroner's note about "Beliefs regarding Death in Cumberland"[1] has suggested to me that I might put on record Maltese funeral customs now extant, some of which are analogous to those noticed in Cumberland.

764 363 [84] [565] [191] Amongst our middle and lower classes the practice still lingers of placing a dish of salt on the stomach of the corpse, whether of a male or of a female. The popular belief in Malta is that the salt prevents early decomposition. Certeux and Carnoy[2] give the following interpretation of a practice by Arabs in Algeria: "*Il est de convenance religieuse . . . de lui poser sur le ventre* [of the dead person] *quelque chose de pesant, afin de prevenir le gonflement.*" [539] One of our Maltese sayings runs:

"*Imût il-ghani u jmut il-fqir*
It-tnejn jitmelhu ghal geûûa il-bir."

i.e. "Both the rich man and the poor man die, and both are salted for the pit" (a common rock tomb). This may, however, refer to the pickling or preservation of bodies in a saline solution.

764 The covering over of looking-glasses in the room where the body is lying is also practised by several Maltese families. Some go so far as to remove furniture, and turn round or take down pictures, in the death chamber and passages.

764 171 The following are the most characteristic features of existing Maltese practices, many of which are comparable to those of Sicily, while a few show some Eastern influence:—

(*a*) The washing of the dead body before shrouding. This is not a religious rite, and has no connection with that of Islam.

(*b*) The shutting of the eyelids, if open, and the raising of the chin by means of a band, usually a white kerchief, tied on the head.[3]

(*c*) The removal of door knockers and knobs; house doors are kept closed for several days; neighbours half-shut their own.

[1] Vol. xxxi., p. 154.

[2] *L'Algerie Traditionelle*, p. 223.

[3] This is practised in Algeria. See Certeux and Carnoy, *op. cit.*, p. 223.

5: Cremona B-3, 4 (no date) 1923
EZ6 Malta EZ6

the early morning to hear mass. In old times such seclusion was much more strictly observed, and the period was never less than forty days. For men this sort of mourning did not exceed seven days, and is now generally limited to three days, after the funeral.

III. Old custom prohibited cooking for three days, and the family of the deceased was provided with meals by friends or distant relatives. This rule was, and perhaps is still, followed in some districts of Sicily and amongst Arab tribes of Northern Africa. While meals were being served the bereaved family sat with folded legs on the floor, which was covered with a straw mat. The historian Ciantar relates in 1772 that these mourning dinners still took place in his early days. This custom has now been discontinued, and our village people merely abstain from having their pastry and other food prepared in a public oven for a period of some months after the death of a member of the family.

IV. Men often do not shave for a fortnight or even a month. This practice was more in favour in old times. Middle and lower class people keep away from *festas*, and the higher class from theatres, dancing, and merrymakings.

V. People of rank wear a mourning dress for a few days following a death in their family, but country people are satisfied with wearing a black felt hat and a dark sash round the waist. Women, if wives or brides, follow the continental style of full mourning dress in crape. Some women do not wear a hat or bonnet during the first week of mourning, and go out in *faldettas*, a national head-covering which is more commonly used when attending religious services. Since the seventeenth century the Maltese *faldetta* has undergone some changes in shape and material. The old *faldetta*, as described by Ciantar, was a black veil or cowl covering the head and reaching to the heels, like the Arab and Sicilian women's trailing mantles. Apparently countrywomen wore a blue linen veil, which is still adopted, for economy's sake, in some of the eastern seaside hamlets of the island, but amongst the lower class in general the black hood, which matrons changed into silk with lace edges, was more common. Bombasine (without lace) or silk *faldettas* are now

5: Cremona S-3, 4 (no date) 1923
EZ6 Malta EZ6

fanation. Wreaths are laid on the grave, and oil lamps are lit on it for some days. The construction and decoration of the graves in the public cemetery is much the same as on the continent. Marble slabs with inscriptions are very common. Pillars with crosses on the top and sacred statues are also erected on bases of marble, or bronze reliefs symbolising Time and Eternity. The higher class own vaults in the form of chapels, in which an altar is erected and requiem masses are said.

In the professional and educated classes cards expressing sympathy are sent by friends to the mourning family, but in some districts, especially in the country, people still follow the old etiquette of paying a mourning visit within nine days of the death. Photographs of the deceased, with an inscription, are sent to friends and acquaintances.

A. CREMONA.

6:Beeley K-5 (1957-1958) 1959 EZ6 Malta EZ6

565 The landed classes in Malta and particularly the nobility have never taken any considerable part in the communal life of the villages in which they maintain their country seats and draw rents from the lands which they own. They have always been more urban than rural and more European than Maltese. A [793] squirearchy on the English pattern has been lacking, and the functions which, in the English village, fell to the squire have, in Malta, come within the wide range of activities of the Parish Priest.

621 795 565 Apart from the clergy[10] and the gentry, the greater part of the population of the traditional village in Malta was made up of the peasantry deriving their livelihood directly or indirectly from the land or in some cases the sea. Within this section of the community homogeneity was the keynote. There was one Church. All the populace were Church members and attended the same services at the same times each day of every [203] week. The Church could therefore be the centre of diffusion of news to the villagers - both relating to farming and to general affairs in and out of the village.

621 565 241 423 [611] [591] Within the village the peasant and his family, patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal, worked the few tmien of land held on rent or lease: rarely was much of it owned by the cultivator. The work of the farm and of the household went on as a single unit (Section 2). The two were often located within the same cluster of buildings (Case VI, v. Plan). Clearly some farmers were richer than others, some had more land, some more animals, but accepted stratification within the village went no further than this: there was no middle class between priest and farmer.

628 197 For the peasant, the bounds of his regular experience were the limits of the village. Contact between villages, even where close together, was slight and invariably less than that between the individual village and Valletta. Evidence of this is found in the dialect differences between villages but equally illuminating is the fact that the basic dialect distinction that can be made is that between the Urban area, with its Italianized vocabulary and intonation, and the rural parts of the Islands with their characteristically broader vowels, harsher gutturals and fewer European words and idioms (B/Aquilina, J). Language is but one aspect of rural culture in the Maltese Islands which reveals the essential independence of the village within the traditional rural scene. 628 186 [794] Village patriotism is expressed in inter-Parish rivalry and in a variety of regional reputations, proverbs, and local lore. Thus the shrewdness of the inhabitants of Rabat is revealed by the saying that "A man from Rabat is worth two Jews"[12]. The men of Żebbuġ (Malta) are acknowledged to be merchants par excellence however, while those of Qormi

654 809 467 178 (ii) The younger generation are not interested in improving farming; they scarcely stop to think that any changes in the industry might be possible in their present anxiety to find a new job in a different walk of life. Thus they will probably not be available to take over Maltese agriculture, improved or otherwise, from their fathers.

SECTION 5 : Conclusions.

369 In conclusion one may attempt to draw together the several general points raised in the previous four Sections. The most important of these may be listed as follows:

(1) The twentieth century is witnessing an accelerating process of the 'urbanization' of rural Malta and Gozo (Section 1). This comprises

(a) material change (the development of electricity, roads, sewage, transport, and a variety of other amenities),

(b) cultural change following general, elementary education - that is literacy, 'emancipation' and the emergence of a critical public awareness,

● [565] [793] (c) social and economic changes which have laid the foundations of a rural middle class, unknown in the traditional village scene. Along with this have come modifications in the pivotal rôle of the Parish Priest and other priests. Some of their traditional functions, notably teaching and caring for the sick, have been taken over by specialists in such fields.

369 829 The factors outlined under (a), (b), and (c) are tending to extend the horizon of the individual villager far beyond the limits of his own village. Whereas he used to work and think within his family and village he is now aware of Malta and beyond.

241 464 178 (2) The particular physical limitations on farming in the Islands have, in the past, ~~made the industry~~ dependent to a very considerable extent on the meticulous hand-labour of the industrious Maltese farmer. This has been necessary not only in cultivation itself but also in the maintenance, and even construction, of the fields and terraces themselves (Section 2). The present younger generation of the farming community is showing itself unwilling to accept the life and work which conditions such as these involved. They have benefited from general elementary education, literacy, and contact with the world outside the villages to the extent of demanding work which seems to them economically and socially rewarding. The past twenty-five years have seen a rapid decline in the number of full-time farmers and farm-workers. Today the farmer, in most cases no longer assisted by his sons, finds hired labour both scarce and costly (Section 2).

7: Busuttil I, Y-4, 5 (no date) 1894
EZ6 Malta EZ6

late round the *jack*, one of the adversaries' side, who is left for the purpose, is called by the skip (l'imghallem), whose duty is to direct each of the men of his side, to play straight at the jack with force, and this generally succeeds in hitting and carrying away the jack from the neighbourhood of his opponents' bowls. 526

When the game is finished the losers, as a rule, stand drinks to the winning side.

PLAYING AT *MORRA*

The Maltese of the lower class, especially boatmen and coal-heavers are very fond of playing at *Morra*. 524 [565].

The *Morra* is a game that keeps the two adversaries—between whom it is played—on the alert and which creates great excitement between them.

9: Luke G-5 (ca. 1920-ca. 1960) 1960
EZ6 Malta EZ6

CHAPTER XVIII

Old Survivals in Modern Malta

MALTA OCCUPIES A PLACE OF ITS OWN IN THE OLD WORLD not only by reason of the length and unusual character of its annals, not only by reason of the tremendous range of its architectural monuments. It does so because it combines with these features the circumstance that it is the home of a separate race, the smallest of European peoples.

There are, it is true, four independent states in Europe of lesser size than Malta, but the inhabitants of these states do not form distinct racial stocks, nor have they their own languages. The Maltese are the smallest nation with the longest history, and their islands are a microcosm, self-contained. Not only has Malta its own tongue. It has its own University—the oldest in the British Commonwealth Overseas and granted the Royal patronage and the prefix "Royal" by King George VI in his coronation year—with seven faculties: Theology, Laws, Medicine and Surgery, Dental Surgery, Engineering and Architecture, Arts, Science. It has, as we have seen, its own Nobility with their Committee of Privileges. It is an ecclesiastical Province whose Archbishop exercises jurisdiction since 1944 over the bishopric of Gozo, previously immediately subject to the Holy See since its formation in 1864. And in the history of this microcosm has been mirrored the life of the great world around it.

Viewed as a part of the British Commonwealth, Malta is unique in two particulars. It is the only British possession whose Government owns an Opera House and in normal times maintains an annual opera season and conducts the pawnbroking of the nation in the manner of certain Continental States.